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ABSTRACT

The English verb is traditionally presented as having so many "tenses" that both students and teachers are confused. No real logic seems to hold the whole thing together, and teachers' explanations are often off the mark. Organizing verb forms in terms of past, present, and future is not only incorrect, but misleading. The linguist Martin Joos offers a different approach with which to view and analyze the English predicate. This system is presented in practical terms for the classroom teacher. The concepts of remote tense and perfect phase are defined and shown to be a useful way of organizing and teaching verb forms, particularly the most troublesome ones: present and past perfect, conditionals, and reported speech. The emphasis throughout is on the privative meanings denoted by verb form markers, rather than on abstract forms and rules. Tense pattern drills should not be used for intermediate or higher level classes. What students at these levels need is practice switching from form to form, meaning to meaning, not just the mechanical affixing of an "ing." (Author/CFM)

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A Different Approach to the English Verb

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This article is the result of continued frustration in trying to simplify the presentation of the English verb to E.S.L./E.F.L. students. As a quick look through almost any text will show, the English verb is commonly presented as having so many 'tenses' (present simple, pres. continuous, pres. perfect simple, etc . . .) that a mere listing of them is enough to confuse not only students but a good many teachers as well, native speakers included. To make things worse the introduction of this morass of verb forms is most often accomplished in terms of standard situations, formulae (cue phrases or words), or rules (usually with countless exceptions), and very little effort, if any at all, is made by the teacher to reveal what subtle connections exist between these forms which might possibly serve to integrate them into something manageable, both logically and practically. (For example the relationship between what is usually called the 'conditional tense' and the 'past tense', which will be touched on later in this paper, can be greatly simplified if it is pointed out that they both have the same *basic* meaning.)

Verb *forms* per se have dominated in importance over verb form *meanings* to the extent that even when a student can parrot his/her way through tense drills flawlessly, all too often he/she is totally unable (or unwilling) to converse in anything other than the simple present 'tense' outside of the drill situation. The intermediate or

post-intermediate student knows how to construct most forms, but is still unsure of the meaning, except in very limited situations.

The traditional approach to teaching the meanings denoted or connoted by various verb forms has been to use such things as time cues or graphs, or by saying some such nonsense as 'past within the present', and has often, at least to me, seemed forced and artificial – if not wrong or misleading. Taken literally such an approach is at best hit or miss, and students often do just that, take the rules and time ideas literally and then recite them back when asked to explain why a particular mistaken form was chosen, (present and past perfect especially), their explanation often making perfect sense.

The student has been conditioned to look for cues or standard situations rather than meaning, and is confused if anything else turns up. Take this example:

A: Have you ever been to the States?

B: Yes, three years ago.

A student might well be puzzled here because 'three years ago' signals the simple past, whereas in traditional pattern practice the 'perfect' question asks for a 'perfect' answer. Of course in this case the answer *is* in the 'perfect', though it has been left unsaid after the 'Yes', and the second part of the answer merely anticipates the normal follow-up question: "When?" The student's approach in terms of cues and rules has left him baffled because he has been taught to rely on them rather than to look for meaning intended or expressed, which is what allows the native speaker to by-pass cues and take numerous linguistic short-cuts.

In such cases as the above is it the student who is to blame, or could it be that the teacher has unwittingly presented a schema which is at least partially incorrect, a schema not really suited to the English verb at all, but which has been borrowed from Latin or other languages?

With this thought in mind I took particular note of a book entitled: THE ENGLISH VERB (Joos 1968). The author, Martin Joos, presented a different approach, an entirely different schema with which to view and analyze the English predicate, and succeeded in illuminating several troublesome aspects of the verb in what I felt to be a refreshing new light. It is the goal of this paper to

sketch through some of the insights gained with Joos' schema in mind, and to suggest how they might be applied in the classroom, in particular the two concepts: (1) Remote Tense, and (2) Perfect Phase.

VERB SCHEMA:

Figure I is a summary of the schema to be discussed, and is presented with only slight modification from that in Joos' book (Joos 1968: 101). The reader should pay particular note to the categories, Tense and Phase. The other categories in the schema have been included only for those who wish to see how Tense and Phase fit in with the schema in its entirety. (Joos' book discusses them at length.)

FIGURE I

CATEGORY:	Tense	Assertion	Phase	Aspect	Voice	Function
unmarked:	Actual Tense	Factual Assertion	Current Phase	Generic Aspect	Neutral Voice	Propredicate Function
marked:	Remote Tense	Relative Assertion	Perfect Phase	Temporary Aspect	Passive Voice	Verb Function
(marker):	(–d)	(modals)	(have –n)	(be –ing)	(be –n)	(verb: show, write go, tell, etc.)

Explanation: There are six categories of *meaning* with which to describe the predicate, and for each category there is a marked and an unmarked form. (By choosing a marked or unmarked form a speaker chooses the message to be conveyed by that category.) A verb is marked Remote Tense, for example, by taking the marker, (-d), which means the usual 'past tense' form (i.e. the Remote Tense of 'have' is 'had', the Remote of 'is' is 'was', or: (-d) go = went, (-d) bring = brought, (-d) come = came.) The Relative Assertion marker is merely the use of any of the following modals in the predicate: will, shall, must, can, may, ought to, need, dare. (For example the predicate in "I must go," has *Relative* Assertion and *Actual* Tense, whereas the predicate in "I go," has *Factual*

Assertion (no modal was used), and *Actual* Tense. The *Perfect* Phase marker is the following form: have +'past perfect' participle of the verb which occurs next in order in the predicate. e.g. (have -n) show = have shown, (have -n) be = have been. If Voice is also marked, i.e. Passive Voice, then we have: (have -n) (be -n) show = have been shown. (Perfect Phase, Passive Voice) Definitions for each of the markers can be found in Appendix I of this paper, and the use of them will be illustrated in the following examples and in Appendix II.

In the examples each predicate *form* will be described by use of a six-place binary number, (XXXXXX), where X can be either 1 or 0. The six-places stand for each of the six categories: Tense, Assertion, Phase, Aspect, Voice, Function; and if a category is marked, for example Remote Tense, then a '1' will occupy the Tense position, (1XXXXX). Similarly, if a category is unmarked, a '0' will fill that space, (0XXXXX). Thus (001011) means that the predicate has: Actual Tense, Factual Assertion, Perfect Phase, Generic Aspect, Passive Voice, and Verb Function (see Appendix I for definitions of markers). An example of a predicate with form (001011) is, "Money *has been given* to him."

(XXXXXX):	(Tense,	Assertion,	Phase,	Aspect,	Voice,	Function)
(001011):	(Actual,	Factual,	Perfect,	Generic,	Passive,	Verb)
(marker)	(-d)	(modal)	(have -n)	(be -ing)	(be -n)	(give)
example:	0	0	1	0	1	1
	unmarked	unmarked	HAS	unmarked	BEEN	GIVEN

Example:
000111: "He *is being taken* to prison." ($_{\text{Actual}}^{0}$, $_{\text{Factual}}^{0}$, $_{\text{Current}}^{0}$, $_{\text{Temporary}}^{1}$, $_{\text{Passive}}^{1}$, $_{\text{Verb}}^{1}$) 'Take' is the verb, and its suffix, (-n), comes from the Passive Voice marker, as does the 'be'. The suffix 'ing' on 'be' comes from the Temporary Aspect marker as does 'is', since 'is' is the form of 'be' which fits the subject, 'he'. For further examples, including the form (XXXXX0), Propredicate Function, please consult Appendix II.

With this schema in the background we are now ready to narrow our focus to the main subject of this paper: TENSE AND PHASE; and, of course, how it can be useful in the classroom.

TENSE:

In the schema just presented you should note that there are only two tenses: (1) the unmarked tense is called ACTUAL, and (2) the marked tense is called REMOTE. To get a feel for what it means to mark a verb REMOTE TENSE, let's look at a few examples:

(1) "John *has* his wallet." ACTUAL TENSE. This unmarked tense predication means that the possession of the wallet is contemporary and real to the person speaking.

(2) "John *had* his wallet." REMOTE TENSE. This marked form means that the possession of the wallet is somehow absent, or remote, from the contemporary, real world of the person speaking – in this case historical reality.

(3) "If he *had* his wallet he could pay." REMOTE TENSE. This marked form again has the meaning that the possession of the wallet is somehow absent, or remote, from the contemporary, real world of the person speaking – in this case contemporary *unreality*. The word 'if' signals 'possibility', or 'hypothesis', and the Tense signals remoteness, in this case unreal, though contemporary in time.

(4) "She said John *had* his wallet." REMOTE TENSE. (The sentence here is an answer to: "Who did she say had his wallet?") Note: In this example it should be noted that contemporary time is obvious to the listener through the situation and is part of the message always implicit within context. In this case the words she actally spoke were: "John has his wallet." The Remote Tense form, 'had', then marks reported, or remote, speech, and the message is that the quotation is being given second hand, or is absent from the contemporary, real world of the person speaking. If we want to report speech as if it were actually happening before us, then we must use the Actual Tense form: "She said: "John *has* his wallet," and perhaps imitate her voice.

From just these few examples we can see a definite thread

running through what are normally seen and taught as unrelated: (1) Past tense, (2) Conditional, and (3) Reported Speech. That they have exactly the same verb form, in this case, 'had', (Remote Tense), is clear, and yet they are taught separately, as if there were no connection. They are taught with no regard to the primary meaning they all have in common, i.e. remoteness. Of course the secondary meanings vary, (sometimes indicated by cues, sometimes not – often indicated solely by context or even intonation), and yet the definite relationship which unites them, and which makes the verb form easy to understand, is never mentioned.

A definition of the Remote Tense is: the marked form of the predicate which means that the referent (what is specified by the subject-verb partnership) is absent from that part of the real world where the verb is being spoken (Joos 1968: 149).

The important thing to notice here is that time itself is no longer synonymous with tense, because 'absence from the real world' means absence in the sense of either time or reality, or even thought. For example the choice of the Remote Tense 'had' in the sentence: "He *would work* if he *had* a hammer, but he *doesn't*" (110001),(100000),(000000), has nothing whatever to do with past time, but rather expresses contemporary 'unreality'. The fact is that he *isn't* working, because he *doesn't have* a hammer. The meaning of Tense is either Actual, or Remote, and the secondary meanings are distinguishable only by use of other pointers, i.e. context, intonation.

At this point it is important to note that the Remote Tense does not carry the meaning of futurity. In English, future time is considered 'actual', not remote from the speaker. We don't speak about a future time as such, but rather our relation, intended, planned, probable, with it (Joos 1968: 134–136)[1] (In fact, future time is often, but not always, expressed by using relative Assertion – see Appendix I – with the Actual Tense). For example the following sentence can express either future or present time with absolutely no change in tense, in this case Actual Tense: "John

[1] This rather important point is discussed at several points in Joos' book, particularly in the section on the ASSERTION CATEGORY, Chapter VI

is going to the United States." If this sentence is spoken while we are at the airport watching John's plane lift off the runway then the meaning is quite obviously contemporary, and factual – either true or false – but if John is sitting across from us at a baseball game in Tokyo then we know that the time referred to can't possibly be contemporary, but has to be future, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps in six months, but certainly not now; and we have a *prediction* relative to fate and the world. (No truth value can be assigned at this point in time.)

The Actual Tense means that an event is being expressed in 'here and now' terms, and yet the time of the occurrence, or possible occurrence, is left wide open, most often determined contextually in such a way that all but the intended time is ruled out by conflicting with what is already known in context. It's even possible to refer to events in the historical past by use of the Actual Tense, and if one does so, for example by using the Historical Present Narrative, (Joos 1968: 131)[2] then its effect is to bring the listener into the narration as if it were happening before his eyes.

The use of the Remote Tense marker, (-d), however, eliminates meanings allowed by Actual Tense in a way similar to a camera filter that allows through only specified wavelengths of light. Once the Remote Tense marker is used, the idea of remoteness is forced, and the 'here and now' possibility is ruled out; we know quite specifically that one of several remote messages is intended. With the aid of context or cues it is then quite simple to pick out which message is meant, though they are all Remote.

The English speaker, like a photographer, often has a choice of whether or not to use a marked form (filter) or not; and it is partly because of this characteristic that the English verb is as flexible and

[2] The narrative use of the actual tense is not the same as a running commentary on what is happening before one's eyes, because the ASPECTS are used as if the verb were in the remote tense. There is an example of this on page 132 of Joos' book and it begins like this: "Before anyone quite realizes what is happening there is somewhere a kind of exercise-book and it has gone from counsel to the usher and is now in front of Nurse Stronach, who at once *begins* to turn the pages . . ." Running commentary would be: "I'm afraid I don't quite realize what is happening. There seems to be a kind of exercise-book. Now it has gone from counsel to the usher, and now it's in front of Nurse Stronach. She *is beginning* to turn the pages . . ."

interesting as it is – and why it so often resists the neat but incorrect rules cited on its behalf. Using the English verb is more an art than a science in this respect.

Now we will discuss how this new approach to Tense can be useful in the classroom. First of all it is not intended that this schema be presented as such to students; but rather that it should help guide the teacher in organizing a presentation, i.e. dialogues, contextual situations (ideally, thematically tied together) (Harshbarger 1976), so that the relationship between form and meaning of the verb can be fully appreciated, and in a practical way. The idea of 'remoteness', for example, can be very useful in teaching what has traditionally been called the 'conditional tense.' Take this sentence: "If he *didn't* always *insist on* doing things his own way, (100001), then he *wouldn't be* so unpopular." (110001)
Note: 'would' is the remote tense of 'will'. Both clauses are marked Remote Tense. But first we must remember that this sentence is never uttered just by itself, but is always encountered in context, and should therefore be taught that way; therefore it should be presented as it would naturally occur, (Harshbarger 1976) or at least in terms of a short dialogue:

A: —
B: —
A: Nobody wants him to come to the party.
B: Well, if he *didn't* always *insist on* doing things his own way, he *wouldn't be* so unpopular.

Now of course the time is obviously contemporary (context makes this obvious), and since the verbs are marked remote (100001, 110001), it isn't difficult to conclude that unreality is the remote message meant, especially since 'if' marks 'hypothesis' (though it can be either a real or unreal hypothesis). To get this across to a class a series of rapid-fire questions like the following can be quite useful:

Q: "Is he popular? REAL
A: "No." (If a student or class answers "Yes," then don't

correct, but rather immediately follow-up with, "Then why doesn't anybody want him to come to the party?") REAL

Q: "Why isn't he popular?" REAL

A: "He isn't popular because he always insists on doing things his own way." REAL

Q: "Suppose he didn't. If he didn't insist on doing things his own way, would he still be unpopular?" UNREAL

A: "No, he wouldn't." UNREAL

Q: "But he does, doesn't he, so what about the party?" REAL

A: "Nobody wants him to come." REAL

Notice how we're shifting back and forth, from real to unreal, from actual meaning to remote meaning; and of course the time never changes. Here is another example:

A: Oh, what a beautiful sight!

B: If John {*had brought* / *had*} his camera, we *could get* a good picture.
{(101001) / (100001)} (110001)

Q: "Are they going to take a picture?" (000001)

A: "No." (000000)

Q: "Why not?" (000000)

A: "They can't. They don't have a camera." (010000) (000001)

Q: "Why don't they?" (000000)

A: "John doesn't have his camera." (000001)

Q: "Suppose John had his camera, then what?" (1000001)

A: "They would take a picture." (110001)

Q: "That's right. They would if they could, but they can't."

As in these examples; it's important to have students mixing forms, thereby giving them practice both understanding and using these concepts as they really occur outside the classroom. Don't mix forms arbitrarily, of course, but so that meaning can be revealed, and so that students can have practice expressing that meaning. One more example:

If I $\begin{Bmatrix} go \\ went \end{Bmatrix}$ with you, $\begin{Bmatrix} I'll \\ d \end{Bmatrix}$ have to be back by this evening. The top line is Actual Tense and expresses that the possibility is viewed as real (greater than 50% chance of happening) and the bottom line is Remote Tense and expresses that the possibility is relatively unreal (less than 50% chance of happening). So the teacher might ask questions that bring out that difference, and then, of course ask students to do the same. Now that the students understand the meaning rather than just form, they should have little difficulty.

Teaching the historical-past, unreal meaning and its relationship to the Remote Tense is somewhat more difficult:

"It was quite a sight."
"If John *had had* his camera, we *could have taken* a good picture."

Note that both predicates are marked Remote Tense, Perfect Phase, (101001, 111001). This verb form often has the meaning of historical past and unreality; but it is important to know that such a meaning is not forced. Past-meaning is usually the case, but in fact the time dimension is not fixed by the verb form, and again must be decided in context and by the meaning of the verb itself. To see this: "If he'*d studied* English for as long as you *have* he *wouldn't be* so reticent." (101001, 001000, 110001) This example most clearly expresses contemporary unreality, not past unreality. Another example: "If he *hadn't died* so suddenly (last week), he *would have spent* next week preparing his will." (101001, 111001) In this case the first clause obviously refers to the past, and the second refers to the future.

In both examples just cited the 'if' clauses have exactly the same verb form, 101001, and yet their place in time is different. The only thing we definitely know is that the meaning is remote, and we must look to context and other clues to know exactly what time is meant, which by now should be no surprise at all, since the grip that time has traditionally held on verb discussions is obviously only an illusory one at best. Once again a series of rapid questions to insure competence in understanding and expressing meaning

appears to be a good way to drill this in the classroom. Ideally, if there is a thematic approach to teaching the class (Harshbarger 1976), then such drills will hardly be drills at all, but merely a natural part of the linguistic function called for via thematic considerations.

PHASE:

The concept of Phase has already been alluded to several times in this paper, and is another useful idea to emerge from Joos' analysis. I think it provides a fairly clear understanding of why the 'perfect tenses' have so often been confusing to students. First of all, the Perfect Phase is not a tense at all, but rather it expresses something completely different, a different *relationship* between the subject and predicate, a relationship which changes the function of the predicate by emphasizing the predicated event's *result* on the grammatical subject. The state of the subject as the result of the predication is focused on, rather than the predication itself. To put it simpler, the predicate is reduced to a kind of modifier (which expresses the current state of the subject as the result of a predication 'out of phase' (Joos 1968: 139) with the time of assertion). 'Out of phase' means that the time of the predicated event is unable to be determined in and of itself, but rather is determined *relative* to some *other* predication. (Examples will follow shortly to make this clear.) Since the *other* predication is *subsequent* to the perfect phase predication, the secondary meaning of Perfect Phase is something like 'previous to'; and unfortunately this is usually what is considered to be the primary meaning. This misses the point entirely that the primary meaning of Perfect Phase is that the subject-verb relationship is altered.

Example: "John walked in the door and the telephone rang." This sentence indicates that the first action in the narrative is John walking in the door, and then, later, or almost at the same time – but not before – the telephone rang. Both actions have been given equal weight in the narrative, and, importantly, there is no relationship linking them. But in this sentence: "John had walked in the door when the telephone rang," the emphasis of the narrative

is clearly on the second event, the telephone ringing, and the *state* of John when it happened. The use of the Perfect Phase marker de-emphasizes John's walking and has the effect of 'setting the stage' for the telephone to ring – in fact, it points to it. John walking in is more a description of John than a presentation of his action. "John had walked in the door," is an incomplete statement without something to follow it – we are left leaning forward, waiting to hear what comes next. But "John walked in the door," stands by itself, safe and sure in its own world and time.

It is interesting to point out here that writers use this meaning of the Perfect Phase marker to help build suspense. By carefully using the Perfect, events can be linked, and a sense of anticipation can be introduced into a narrative. (See Appendix III).

The role of the verb is changed by the Perfect Phase marker then, and is denied an independent place or time for itself. It does nothing at all to advance the plot or report action, but rather sets the scene for an event that will. Again, the time for such a Perfect Phase event must be understood in reference to the subsequent main event, for the Perfect Phase marker takes an event out of absolute time and makes it relative (out of phase) – previous.

Example: "I've been to America twice, but I still can't speak English very well." To know the time he was in America requires an additional question and answer: "When were you there?" or "Oh, when did you go to America?" followed by an answer like "Last year." The Perfect Phase marker, (have -n), in this case, 've been, indicates an Actual state of having done something, and is almost a characterization. We are not talking about an act or an event which took place sometime in the definite or indefinite past (since the speaker might be sitting before you in the same room in Japan and has quite obviously been there for some time), but is information about the subject, 'I', at the time of discourse. (The message is Actual.) Once again the point to notice is that the use of the Perfect Phase marker shifts attention toward the subject and away from the verb – the verb is subordinated *in function* to something like a modifier. There is certainly a reference to a previous time, because the *result* of the predication has been built up by events previous to the time of assertion; but that is secondary and should not be

overplayed as it almost always is. Students should *not* be told to look in time for the meaning of Perfect Phase. Students must be guided into the realization that Perfect and Current Phases present a different focus: "What are we talking about here, the person or his trip?" In a case like: "I had studied English for five years," the question to ask is: "What then?" This of course emphasizes that such a sentence cannot stand by itself and must be linked to something else. If the message to be expressed is that 'he had studied English for five years' then it must be expressed as either (1) I have studied English for five years, or (2) I studied English for five years. (when I was in college). (1) expresses the Actual *state* of 'I' at the time of utterance and (2) expresses the Remote *predication*, 'studied for five years', (when I was in college).

CONCLUSION:

This paper has been a sketch, and is far from complete in its scope; yet hopefully it's clear by now that the ideas presented, particularly TENSE and PHASE, can reveal a great deal about how the English verb actually operates; and this is invaluable to a good English teacher. Also it should be clear by now that context is a vital determiner in choosing between various possible meanings which a verb form will allow. It would seem obvious too, that presentation of verb forms outside of context should be avoided as much as possible in the classroom, especially at or above intermediate levels. For these students it's often the case that given a drill situation they do quite well rattling off the correct answers, but in any other situation flounder about helplessly, completely unable to integrate and use what they've been drilling. Keeping in mind just two Tenses, Actual and Remote, instead of a confusing bagful, a teacher can more easily guide and stimulate discussions so that minimum confusion and wasted effort occur and so that meaning emerges.

The English verb is not dry and uninteresting, but is like a fine camera with different lenses and filters. The right or wrong choice is not the way to look at a scene, but rather which lens, or verb-form, would express best the intended message. This kind of question

cannot be answered unless verb-form meaning is understood in the same way that a good photographer understands his equipment – as an artist rather than a dry technician. As difficult as this might seem at first, its end result is to simplify, and, as a by-product, stimulate some hard thinking in an area of vital importance to the E.S.L./E.F.L. teacher, that has been taken for granted for too long, and by too many.

APPENDIX I

DEFINITIONS OF CATEGORY MARKERS (Joos 1968: 199):

VERB FUNCTION: (marker: show, give, go, read, want. . . .) None of the predicate's meaning is to be guessed-in, i.e. the predicate is complete. Example: "Would you *like* to go?" "Yes, I would." The predicate in the question is complete, whereas the verb 'like' has been left-out of the predicate in the answer and must be guessed-in. Thus the first has *marked* VERB FUNCTION, and the second has *unmarked* PROPREDICATE FUNCTION. (Further examples can be found in Appendix II)

PASSIVE VOICE: (marker: be -n): The grammatical subject does not designate the actor. Example: "They *were given* two tickets."

TEMPORARY ASPECT: (marker: be-ing): The validity of the predication vanishes outside a certain span of time. Example: "He usually plays tennis like an expert, but today *is playing* badly." It would sound quite strange to end the sentence like" . . . but today plays badly," because part of the message intended is that his bad playing is temporary. Likewise, in this example: "He *is waiting* for the bus," expresses something temporary, whereas "He waits for the bus everyday at five o'clock," does not. Another example: "He is a doctor," means that his profession is medicine, whereas "He is being a doctor," implies that he might be pretending or playing the part.

PERFECT PHASE: (Have -n): The specified event is not interesting for its own sake, but rather its results, or what follows. The state of being of the subject is pointed at, rather than the action content of the verb. Example: "He has been to the United States." The specified event happened in the past, but the message of the sentence is entirely in the present because the use of the Perfect Phase has focused our attention on the state of being of the subject, 'he'. Thus 'he' *is* someone who at one time went to the United States, just like 'he' *is* short, fat, and twenty-three years old.

REMOTE TENSE : (-d) : The specified event is absent from the scene of the asserting: it is in the historical past, or unreal, or in some other way remote (as in reported speech.)

FACTUAL ASSERTION: (unmarked): The *event* alluded to has a definite truth value: it is either true or false at the time and place of assertion. "He *went* to dinner last night," "He *is planning* to go to the United States next year." Both statements are either true or false, but "The ship will leave next Tuesday," has no determinable truth value until next Tuesday has come and gone.

RELATIVE ASSERTION: (marker: will, shall, etc. . .) There is no such truth value with respect to occurrence of the event; what is asserted is instead a specific *relation* between that event and the factual world . . .

APPENDIX II

000000: (Actual, Factual, Current, Generic, Neutral, Propredicate)
A predicate with this form, all categories unmarked, is quite common in conversation. Example: "Yes, I *do.*" This is an answer to something like, "Do you want something to eat?" In the answer the verb, 'want', has been left out to be guessed in by the listener – hence Propredicate Function. 'Do' serves as a pointer only, and in this case is meaningless by itself, since without hearing the question there is no possible way to know what it would refer to.

100100: "You were planning to go, *weren't* you?" (another example of Propredicate Function)

001001: "*has decided*" (ACTUAL, FACTUAL, *PERFECT*, GENERIC, NEUTRAL, *VERB*)

001011: "*has been decided*" (ACTUAL, FACTUAL, *PERFECT*, GENERIC, *PASSIVE, VERB)*

010011: "*Will be decided*" (0, RELATIVE, 0, 0, PASSIVE, VERB)
ASSERTION VOICE FUNCTION

100100: "Yes, I *was.*" (as an answer to "Were you planning to go?")
In this example note that ASPECT is marked TEMPORARY because the answer, if fully completed, would be: "Yes, I was planning to go."

100101: "Yes, I *was.*" (as an answer to "Were you there?")

101101: "The phone *had been ringing* for five minutes when . . ."

111011: "He *would have been arrested,* but . . ." ('would' is the Remote Tense form of 'will')

111111: It is interesting to note that this form is never spoken in English, though it is logically allowed by this schema. An example would be: "The bell *would have been being rung.*"

APPENDIX III

An illustration of how the Perfect Phase Marker can be used to link-up events in a way which builds suspense in a narrative description:

EXAMPLE: (Grammatically correct, but flat and uninspiring)

> The night was cold and stormy. The men fished for three hours. Then the moon went behind a cloud and the sky darkened. Suddenly something rammed the boat.

Each event is separate. The first sentence is background; the second sentence expresses an action quite independent of what follows, as does the third; and the last sentence comes as just another, not special in any way, except perhaps by being introduced by the word 'suddenly' in a last ditch effort to add suspense – of course by this point it's too late.

EXAMPLE: (After inserting the Phase Marker – a dramatic change)

> The night was cold and stormy. The men *had been* fishing for three hours when the moon went behind a cloud and the sky darkened. Suddenly something rammed the boat.

Though the time sequence is the same as in the first example, the effect is entirely different. The sentences are linked. The fact that 'the moon went behind a cloud and the sky darkened' is now significant, because it has been pointed to by the perfect 'had been fishing'. We know there is something special about this time, so we are waiting to find out what is about to happen – this, of course, is how suspense is built. The event, 'the men had been fishing . . .' is no longer independent, but rather points to something further along. By carefully, and lightly, planting such 'seeds' of suspense in a narrative, a skillful writer can keep tension in what might otherwise be a dull series of unrelated events. Once again we see how a grammatical device is far from being dry and uninteresting; it should be regarded in the same way as an artist regards various colors and techniques of application. Blindly following 'rules' leads to a bland rendering of even the most beautiful subject.

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